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SUBJECT: AFRICA BUREAU SENIOR ADVISOR ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION
TRAVELS TO NORTHERN UGANDA.

11. Summary: August 15 to 17 Senior Advisor on Conflict Resolution, Timothy Shortley, traveled to northern Uganda to meet with local leaders and affected populations. The primary objectives of the trip were to discuss the peace process in Juba, including community consultations on agenda item three; how the US can help ensure a successful conclusion to the peace process, and a dignified return of the displaced population (IDPs); and support reconciliation and recovery. The Senior Advisor met with IDPs and returnees in Omiyanima sub-county, Kitgum District, district officials in Gulu and Kitgum, NGOs, UN agencies, members of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, and the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO). The visit was well received. There is positive momentum around the peace process and IDP returns; however, gaps remain in recovery assistance that if unaddressed could hamper IDP returns and reconciliation. End Summary.

Local leaders say "help us keep our eye on the ball" and "no impunity"

12. The Senior Advisor met with local district chairmen (the group consists of mostly elected opposition party) and Resident District Commissioners (RDC) (central Government appointees) in Kitgum and Gulu districts to discuss the Peace process in Juba, community consultations, and how the US could help. Local officials consistently requested US support in keeping both the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda (GOU) to the agenda and moving forward, as well as a close eye on Khartoum. There is fear that the longer the Juba talks go on the greater the risk of support of the LRA by Khartoum. Further, there was wide concern that the northern Ugandan diaspora representing the LRA at the Juba talks is not representative of the Acholi people (nor other northern ethnic groups), and that they are pursuing their own political agenda potentially jeopardizing the peace process.

13. On the issue of justice District officials said that traditional justice "Mato Oput" is inappropriate for senior leaders who committed atrocities. The RDCs also felt the senior leaders to stand trial should include the four International Criminal Court (ICC) Indictes and commanders that led massacres at Lamore in January 1997, Muchwini in June 2002, Atiak in 2005, Namokora 2003, Pader pots 2003, Balene in 2004 bringing the total to ten. They also said it is unlikely any of the senior to mid-level LRA will be comfortable returning to Acholiland, and will likely relocate in other parts of Uganda. The Gulu RDC indicated that the ten most wanted have already decided that they will not return to Uganda, and that they would agree to:

-- Exile in a non-Western country, (e.g. Central African Republic (CAR)), with a judicial process in Uganda that provides reasonable sentences in abstentia.

-- A jury could be formed made up of traditional Chiefs and other northern representation to ensure an appropriate sentence, including
¶1. Compensation (i.e. implementation of the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP)), 2. Never assume a leadership position, and
¶3. Banned from Acholiland.

The Vice Chairman of Gulu District identified "guarantor" of the implementation of the Juba Peace agreement and the Government PRDP as a helpful role for the US to play. Other priorities emphasized by the District Chairmen included: security sector reform and support for local governance, empowerment and capacity building, provision of vital services and repair of infrastructure in return areas; and, support to economic growth (including funds to expand trade with South Sudan).

Acholi Religious Leaders say "Give Reconciliation a Chance"

¶4. Representatives of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) stressed the need to diffuse or mitigate future conflict by appropriately addressing grievances of the Acholi and other northern populations. "We must seek justice that will give reconciliation a chance," they told the Senior Advisor. To reach this goal the Juba peace process must incorporate use of local traditional justice systems as well as the legal system to achieve accountability and reconciliation. Further, to prevent future conflict it is necessary to add truth telling--including GOU and UPDF--commemorative memorials and national reconciliation events. ARLPI representatives feel strongly that some LRA commanders should be invited to participate in the community consultations on accountability and reconciliation, agenda item three. [Note: This point was also made by other local leaders. End note.] And they hold similar views to other local leaders in Gulu and Kitgum that the Diaspora

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representation at the Juba talks is not representational of northern views.

With or Without a Final Resolution Significant Population Movement is Expected

¶5. The Senior Advisor heard from NGOs and UN Agencies in Kitgum and Gulu Districts and ECHO that people are monitoring the peace process and waiting to hear new developments before fully abandoning the camps. In addition to a final resolution in Juba, the most critical needs now are water, health, education and roads in return areas; need for life saving humanitarian relief is narrowing. All night commuter facilities are closed in Kitgum. [Note: A few remain open in Gulu to provide social services to youth. The facilities no longer host children fearing abduction by the LRA. End note.] Lack of grass for thatching roofs is an immediate impediment to return. However, grass will be widely available in November and December and significant movement is expected. Some IDPs will move to transit sites closer to home, while others will move all the way home. In both scenarios, the lack of basic services in return areas requires IDPs to split families or choose interim locations that allow access to goods and services that continue to be available in camps/trading centers. Services must move with the population, but this is a daunting task with over 380 new sites across Acholiland.

¶6. Beyond the provision of goods and services UN OCHA emphasized that significant efforts must be focused on building government capacity and local government ownership of the impending challenges. Creating economic opportunities and ensuring availability of basic infrastructure is critical to long term conflict resolution. To work, relief and recovery assistance must be coupled with a viable political solution to the conflict.

The People Welcome the Return of LRA but Request Assistance

¶7. August 17 the Senior Advisor traveled to Omiyanima sub-county in Kitgum District to meet with war affected populations beginning the

process of returning home. Two sites were visited, Kalele village, a site where IDPs have returned directly to their place of origin, and Labowomor, a spontaneous transit site. Discussions with the IDPs and returnees confirmed points made by NGOs and UN Agencies both in regards to increasingly significant population movement in November and need for services in return areas. The population spoke positively about reintegrating LRA combatants in the name of Peace. However, they requested significant psychosocial interventions prior to the return of ex-combatants and abductees, including transit through reception centers, counseling, and vocational training. [Comment: Well over half of the returnees spoken to in Kalele said they had a child abducted into the LRA. Some have still not returned. Almost all had lost a family member in the conflict.]

Conclusion and Recommendations:

18. The US Mission has extended development programs into the north and leveraged emergency funds to start addressing immediate recovery, especially in water infrastructure in return areas, and to jump start agriculture. Three hundred eighty new sites and escalating population returns offer the beginning of a long reconciliation process. However, this positive momentum created by returns could be quickly negated by the overwhelming need for services in return areas. Gaps remain uncovered in water, health, education, and economic growth. District officials pleaded for US help in achieving local government capacity to deliver services. Similarly, US support for security sector reform--from policing to re-starting judicial systems--was requested. The Senior Advisor's visit was well received and helped meet the local thirst for information on US policy and engagement.

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